

Vermont Community Broadband Board
Unapproved Governing Board Meeting Minutes
August 26, 2021
Held in Dill Auditorium
2178 Airport Road, Barre Vermont
Christine Hallquist
Executive Director
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09:04 – meeting opened.

- Roll call – Board members present; Patty Richards – chair, Dan Nelson, Holly Groschner, Laura Sibilia, Brian Otley (virtual)
- ***A request was made with no objection to modify the agenda to start with the History (Pre-construction presentation), Core Objectives and Base-line data to the front of the agenda.***
- ***Motion to approve agenda for this meeting; Holly Groschner moved, Dan Nelson seconded – motion passed.***

Pre-construction presentation (History)

A discussion ensued regarding make-ready costs as they relate to Detailed Design.

- Request was made to for the DPS to make available the annual capital plans of the utilities and the related GIS shapefiles so that the CUDs can coordinate. This request also extends to the Agency of Transportation.
- **The board made the following policy statements:**
 - **Business plans shall include all network costs to the premise, including drops.**
 - **Individual CUDs will determine their respective pole ride-outs.**

Affordability and Low-income challenges

A discussion ensued regarding how the Business Plans are going to create opportunities for low-income residents

- Include Affordability and Low-income strategies as part of the grant scoring process.
- These topics also will be part of the Business Plan quality assessment.
- The Board would like staff to find the 2019 report on distressed areas of the state.
- Provide the Board with criteria that was used for the Feasibility Studies and the Business Plans
- Constructing a network of the highest value shall be a topic included in the CUD workshops.
- Develop a scorecard for the Board.

Grant Discussion

- Board would like to know if the RFPs can be released prior to the state releasing the funds. The Board recommends a parallel effort with the administration.

- Grants will be evaluated based on addresses that *can* be served, versus *will* be served.
- Develop a checklist for compliance with ACT 71.
- Board requests staff to provide a common financial model for the CUDs.
- Recognize that some areas will have a higher cost per customer due to lower densities.
- Pre-construction funds are limited only to the CUDs.
- **Policy statements:**
 - **CUDs will be allocated funds based on the towns that were members as of June 1, 2021**
 - **An Operating Agreement shall be considered as part of the Pre-Construction grant. It shall be at least in negotiation, and it shall comply with ACT 71.**
- Staff will make grant recommendations to the Board. Board will approve those grants prior to funds disbursement.
 - Staff will ensure a legal review was completed prior to submittal.
- The Board will provide comments on the Draft RFP to staff by the end of the day on September 2, 2021. Staff will incorporate comments and issue RFP after.

Baseline Data Discussion

- Questions for staff – how are the CUDs accounting for baseline data?
- Board requests staff to put in motion a process to get the DPS data updated now. VCBB will fund the effort

Core Objectives Discussion

- Ensure CUD plans consider capacity of interconnections
- Define Open Access
- Include in plans how the last piece of the network will be funded
- Long-term funding of the network shall be included
- Board requests staff to source a municipal bond expert to help set criteria for CUD planning
- CUDs shall coordinate relationships with the electric utilities as well as the Telecom providers in their respective districts.
- Reliability will be part of the scoring criteria.
- Enabling E911 services will be part of the scoring criteria.
- Utility connectivity into the home will be needed for load control.
- The VCBB will review how the networks interconnect as well as the core transport systems.
- The VCBB will create minimum design standards.

Budget Discussion

- Include Broadband Project Developer as part of the VCBB staff.
- Divide the budget into; funding from ACT 71 administration budget; other funding.
- Include a Finance person as part of the VCBB staff.
- Board requested staff to work with NBRC to develop a 5-year funding plan.

Public Input

- Steve Whittaker – Complying with 202 is not optional. The VCBB must comply
- Jerry Diamantides of CVFiber – appreciated the Board progress today.
- Kristen Fountain of NEK Broadband – Requests VCBB staff develop a process for near-to-real-time updates to the CUDs.
- Chris Recchia of Valleyenet – Pole surveys must be completed prior to Detailed Design:
 - Need to know pole ownership,
 - Identify pole gaps,
 - Identify underground,
 - Identify railroad and highway crossings.
- Jane Campbell of Lamoille Fibernet– Appreciates the Board progress and supports Kristen's suggestion.

Meeting Schedules

- Meetings will be held on Tuesday afternoons from 1 to 4 starting on September 28, 2021.
- September 2, 2021 meeting starts at 9.
- September 9, 2021 meeting starts at 9:30.
- There will be no meeting on September 20, 2021.

Agenda for September 9, 2021 meeting

- Review revised budget
- Work on Affordability definition
- Work on over-arching standards
- Website
- Jane Tierney visit
 - Update on Pre-construction funds and what is next.
 - The process of Board approval of grants to when the funds get transferred to the CUDs
 - DPS vision of how grant administration will work
 - Priorities
 - Services provided
 - Process and expectations for the position
 - Clarification as to what is allowed for pay
- Plans/timelines for construction

1:04 pm - Meeting adjourned with unanimous consent.